

The Heirs of Ishmael

576 bade asking direct questions of a stranger. A Rueyli
721 called out: "Khalati—it is a great prince who comes, O
blessed daughter, to honour thee."

"And where is his *dira* (pasture) that I may send
Hamar, our old slave, to proclaim him to our neigh-
bour?"

"His name is 'The Young Falcon', and his *dira* ex-
tends as far as his eyes rove. It is thy son, O mother of
Amir Fuaz."

• [752] In this foray, Rasheyd, the leader, had his right hand
721 severed by a sword cut. He fainted from loss of blood.
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648 Our slaves then plunged the mutilated arm in boiling
fat—a desperate remedy but successful, for Rasheyd re-
covered. He carried his amputated hand from that day
forward in the saddle of his racing-camel. It dried up
completely, like the hand of a mummy.

When we reached Bahr Saigal, not far from Dumeyr,
the first Turkish fortress in Syria, its Commandant sent
a cavalry detachment to our camp. He had been in-
formed by telegraph of our illicit operations in the vi-
cinity of the cultivated lands of Mesopotamia. His
troopers were seeking Rasheyd, who was to be made an-
swerable. But Rasheyd could not reconcile himself to
the prospect of a Turkish dungeon. He placed his with-
ered hand in a leather bag and dictated to Nauaf's *katib*
(scribe) the following letter addressed to the Comman-
dant at Dumeyr:

"In the name of the Benevolent and Compassionate!
As *askar* (soldier) I cannot serve thy *Padishah* (Sultan),
for I have but a stump of an arm. As thy prisoner I
could do no work for thee; nay, as a friend I could not

FOOD

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Sahr is a piece of camel's fat spitted on a small stick and roasted on the fire. 252

Camel's fat is known as *šahm*; cut up and boiled into suet it is known as *mahlû* or *widač*. In the kettle in which the fat is thus rendered a sediment called *ħali*, something like swards, remains on the bottom. The *widač* is poured into a leather bag, *ğarf* (or *naħw*), and kept for as long as three years. In the hot season the Rwala prefer it to butter because it is cool. Nobody sells camel's suet, except perhaps a very stingy person. *Widač* is a good remedy for boils and suppurating wounds. [752]

The best meat is obtained from a fat she-camel, 'adla, between four and ten years old. The flesh of an older she-camel, especially a lean one, *helime*, cannot be properly boiled. It always remains tough and has no taste. The flesh of young camels less than three months old, *ħwâr*, has a bad effect on the stomach. 262
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The Rwala also feed on blood. Only a bird's heart they throw away for fear of becoming as timid as the bird. "He has a bird's heart, *kalbeh kalb at-ţejr*," means: "He is easily frightened."

MEALS

Members of the family of the tent owner take their meals in the women's compartment. Food for guests is carried into the men's compartment, where sometimes their host sups with them together with his eldest son. 264
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When supper is ready, the host gives the order: "Pour water for the men so that they can wash! *řasselû 'a-r-reğâl*." A slave, a son, or a younger relative takes a *žedah*, wooden vessel, with water, goes from man to man, and pours a few drops upon the contracted fingers of the right hand. If the master is waiting with his acquaintances for supper, he calls to his son, his daughter, or to a male or female slave: "Give us supper! *ħallet ena-l-'aša*." The person who brings the meal places it before him, saying: "Here is the supper, *hâhi-l-'aša*." If an esteemed guest is present, the host himself goes to fetch the supper, accompanies the sons or the slaves carrying the *řahñ*, and places it either in front of the most esteemed guest or at the side of the fireplace. The host calls by name those who are to take supper first, *tařutt*. The person thus invited rises, goes to

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*Zall ar-rabī w-hawdarow lal-kejj
w-al-ṣarw mā wakna 'alejh
jā-bu nhūd ḍannehen al-bejj
w-al-ḵalb waḡlānen 'alejh.*

Gone is the time of plenty, and they have departed to
the pastures of the midsummer;
But the beauty we nowhere saw.
Oh, for her with breasts like eggs!
My heart is grieving for her.

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In the time of the sultry heats of midsummer, *al-kejj*,
the Bedouins camp in the lowlands, where water is found in
abundance; therefore they have descended, *hawdarow*, from
the plateaus.

*Abri ataratta bel-manām
w-al-'ajn mā hi nājime
'eddi ṣawiben bel-manām
mā ṣawwedū ḥazājimeh*

I desire to cover myself in my bed,
But my eyes cannot close in sleep;
I feel like one lying wounded on his couch,
Whose bandages they have failed to renew.

[752]

'Eddi or ḍanni means: "I feel like." *Ṣawīb* signifies to
be wounded seriously, but not fatally. *Ḥazājem* are poultices
and bandages. If not applied well and renewed, *mā ṣawwedū*,
they cause still greater pain.

*Ḳilt a'arṣini 'ala-z-zarka
ḍann-ar-ramad ṣājeben 'ajni
ḥabb al-ṣaḥi bel-ḥaṣa zarka
muḥṭar 'ala-l-ḍabb ḍawīni
wa' ḍejb 'afni min al-farka
ḍān al-'arab ḍēn ṣawṛtini.*

I said: 'lay me across a gray horse,'
For it seems as if blindness had struck my sight.
Love for the desired one grows in my entrails,
And burns me like red-hot iron laid on the stomach.
Ah, my eyes will become gray from the parting,
If the Arabs take different courses.

OMENS

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When yawning the Rwejli must also be very cautious, as the throat opens wide during this process and the demon then may let a drop of its urine, *jebüle*, fall into the man's throat; the urine enters the stomach and causes various diseases.

The Bedouins should also watch the stars most carefully, because they have more properties unfavorable to man than favorable. Wounds will not heal when pierced by the rays of either the stars or the sun. Therefore the wounded person is laid, wrapped in all sorts of covers, in some corner of the tent so as to keep the rays away from him. Whenever people came to me with one of their wounded relatives, they first pitched a small tent behind the one occupied by me, closed it tightly, and then — not before — proceeded to uncover the wound. If a Rwejli loses his way at night, the stars are to blame, for he took his course from a certain star which changed its position imperceptibly, making the man take a wrong direction. Therefore he will not say "*Tiht*, I lost my way," but "*Enğemt*, I was led astray by the stars." When the stars begin to play with a Rwejli in this manner, even the North Star cannot be depended upon. The best thing to do in that case is to lie down and wait for sunrise. Then the Rwejli can take his bearings himself according to the landmarks and continue his journey.

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RWALA BEDOUINS

757 On falling sick a *Rwepli* instantly ties into his hair or to his head rope some red or green thread as a preventive, *heḡāb*, against pain. If he gets worse and the home remedies will no longer suffice, his relatives send for a seer, *sāheb as-sirr*, entreating him to come and help the patient. A she-camel is promised to Allāh as a sacrifice for restoring health to their sick relative in these words: "O thou face of Allāh, if thou curest this man and liberatest him from the captivity of his disease, I will give thee this she-camel in sacrifice; *jā waḡh allāh in tajjebt hal-walad w-fakkejteh min hal-maraz ilak hal-ḡezūr.*"

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Fractures are healed by a Bedouin versed in the art. He sets the broken bone, lays the limb between narrow boards, and then packs it round with dough made of barley flour, salt, and eggs, or lacking these of *tragacanth*, *helbe*. This composition hardens like rock. After the expiration of twenty-five days the bandage is loosened but it is not removed until after forty days. During that time the patient must not eat anything sweet and is fed on meat only, or, if that cannot be had, on milk.

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A small wound is called *ṣwāb*, a large one *ḡurh*. The wounded man, *ṣawih*, is assigned a separate corner in the tent always on the windward side, so that no bad odor can reach him. Any scent, *riha*, opens the wound anew, increasing the pain and swelling, *tirfer* or *tizerr*. Harmless are the odors of tar, *kuṭrān*, and the drugs of *hantita*, *ḡawelijje*, *ebhel*, *se'ed*, *hawaḡawwa*, *ūd al-hawa*, *damm al-ehwēn*, the smoke from the camel manure, *ḡelle*, tobacco smoke, and sulphur. The wounded person stops his nose with the *kejtarān* or *hantita* drug as a protection against injurious odors. Also he must deny himself sweet dishes, which according to the local belief would cause the wound to fester, *jiddi*, still more. At first soap is applied to the wound, later the *subl* drug. The urine of little children, *bowl al-wurdān*, is used in cleaning wounds. [82] As the wound could not heal if reached by the light of stars, the couch of the wounded person is curtained on all sides by clothing and carpets, and he must not leave it even to satisfy his natural wants. If it is intended to camp in the same place for some length of time, a separate small tent is put up for the patient, closed on all sides, *heḡra*, and at some distance from the camp. Visitors sit round the tent and converse with him, but no one will go inside except his nearest relative. For there might be a visitor who, having just had sexual inter-

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DEATH AND AFTER DEATH

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course, has not yet washed himself, and such an unclean one, *nefes*, would make the wound still worse, *mustarfer*: The visitor salutes with the words: "May thy evil disappear! *jizûl šarrak*." Or: "May it disappear and not come over thee any more! *jizûl w-lâ jiflk*." To avoid informing the patient that he looks ill, and thus frightening him, the visitor says: "It seems to me thou hast a healthy color, perhaps nothing ails thee," the patient's reply usually being: "By Allâh himself, nothing is the matter with me, merely so and so."

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If the patient gets worse, nobody must mourn. "We have a soul, and he has a soul obeying Allâh. *ma'ana nesem w-ma'eh nesem taħat allâh*." The patient gets worse every Wednesday and Friday, for these are the heavy days, *jowm at-takîl*, for him. Likewise every sixth, sixteenth, and twenty-first day of the lunar month aggravates the condition of the patient and spreads the news of his illness, *mubajjeħ al-ħabar*.

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A demoniac is called *mħarfal*. As such they consider the imbecile, the demented, and the insane. If he does not get well soon, he is fettered and allowed to perish of thirst.

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If a mad dog, *ħalb mħalât*, bites, *ji'azz*, a man, sulphur is applied to the wound, which is then burned with a red-hot nail. After forty days the injured person generally is stricken with rabies. Then they fetter him and throw hot ashes on his head until he dies.

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In the case of a snake bite the soothsayer, *karrâj*, is sent for and cures the bitten man with his spittle. The *karrâj* learns this art from a member of the Rifâ'ijje Order at an-Nukra in the neighborhood of Damascus, paying one quarter of a *meħidijje* (22.5 cents) for tuition. No snake can harm a *karrâj*.

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Bites of scorpions and poisonous spiders are cured by wrapping the wounded limb in a raw skin or by laying the patient in an oblong pithole, the bottom of which is covered with camel manure thrown over camel urine, *'abas al-bel*. Then, covering the patient up to his head with clay or sand, they build a small fire at his side to make him sweat thoroughly. But to prevent him from falling asleep they shout at him: "O thou who has been bitten by an *'ankabût* spider, wilt thou live or wilt thou die?" He must answer: "I shall live, I shall live, not die."

A person seriously ill appoints a guardian for his young children with the words: "O So-and-So, I do not know what

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